

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application.

1-10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A vacuum sealable storage bag assembly, comprising:
- a plastic bag comprising
 - a first panel defining opposite side edges and opposite end edges;
 - a second panel defining opposite side edges and opposite end edges,
 - the opposite side edges of the second panel coupled to the respective opposite side edges of the first panel, one of the opposite ends of the second panel coupled to an adjacent end of the first panel, wherein a bag opening is defined at another of the opposite ends of the second panel; and
 - a pad of fluid-absorbing material positioned within the plastic bag adjacent the bag opening, the pad of fluid-absorbing material located a distance from the opposite end edges of the first and second panels defining the bag opening, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is also located between a product-holding portion of the bag and the bag opening to absorb fluid drawn toward the bag opening during vacuum sealing operations, and wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is coupled to at least one of the first and second panels.

12. (Original) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 11, further comprising a strip of material located at least partially within the plastic bag and extending toward an exterior area of the plastic bag, the strip of material establishing fluid communication between an interior of the plastic bag and the exterior of the plastic bag, wherein the strip of material is shaped to resist fluid-tight closure of the first panel against the second panel by establishment of fluid passages between the strip of material and at least one of the first and second panels.

13. (Original) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 12, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is coupled to at least one of the first and second panels via the strip of material.

14. (Original) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 11, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material comprises heat-sealable material.

15. (Original) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 11, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is elongated in shape and extends in a substantially lateral direction between the opposite side edges of the first and second panels.

16. (Original) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 12, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material extends substantially entirely across the strip of material adjacent the bag opening.

17-20. (Canceled)

21. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 12, wherein the strip of material has an textured exterior surface.

22. (New) A vacuum-sealable storage bag assembly, comprising:

a plastic bag comprising

a first panel defining opposite side edges and opposite end edges;

a second panel defining opposite side edges and opposite end edges,

the opposite side edges of the second panel coupled to the respective opposite side edges of the first panel, one of the opposite ends of the second panel coupled to an adjacent end of the first panel, wherein a bag opening is defined at another of the opposite ends of the second panel;

a pad of fluid-absorbing material positioned within the plastic bag adjacent the bag opening, the pad of fluid-absorbing material located between a product-holding portion of the bag and the bag opening to absorb fluid drawn toward the bag opening during vacuum sealing operations, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is coupled to at least one of the first and second panels; and

a textured strip of material located at least partially within the plastic bag and extending toward an exterior area of the plastic bag, the strip of material establishing fluid communication between an interior of the plastic bag and the exterior of the plastic bag, wherein the strip of material is shaped to resist fluid-tight closure of the first panel against the second panel by establishment of fluid passages between the strip of material and at least one of the first and second panels.

23. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 22, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is coupled to at least one of the first and second panels via the strip of material.

24. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 22, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material comprises heat-sealable material.

25. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 22, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is elongated in shape and extends in a substantially lateral direction between the opposite side edges of the first and second panels.

26. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 22, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material extends substantially entirely across the strip of material adjacent the bag opening.

27. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 22, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is located within the interior of the bag a distance from the bag opening.

28. (New) A vacuum sealable storage bag assembly, comprising:
a plastic bag having an interior and an exterior, the interior and exterior of the plastic bag in fluid communication with one another only through a mouth of the plastic bag;
a strip of material extending from the interior toward the mouth of the plastic bag, the strip of material having an exterior surface and establishing fluid communication between the interior of the plastic bag and the exterior of the plastic bag, wherein the exterior surface of the strip of material is shaped to resist fluid-tight closure of the mouth by establishment of fluid passages between the strip of material and the plastic bag; and
a pad of fluid-absorbing material positioned within and coupled to the plastic bag adjacent the mouth of the plastic bag, the pad of fluid-absorbing material located between a product-holding portion of the plastic bag and the mouth of the plastic bag to absorb fluid drawn toward the mouth of the plastic bag during vacuum sealing operations.
29. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is coupled to the plastic bag via the strip of material.
30. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material comprises heat-sealable material.
31. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is elongated in shape and extends in a substantially lateral direction between opposite side edges of the plastic bag.
32. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material extends substantially entirely across the strip of material adjacent the mouth of the plastic bag.

33. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is located within the interior of the plastic bag a distance from the mouth of the plastic bag.

34. (New) The vacuum sealable storage bag assembly as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pad of fluid-absorbing material is secured to an interior surface of the plastic bag.